

Recruiting Service falls short of fiscal 1999 enlisted goal

Air Force Recruiting Service finished fiscal 1999, achieving 95 percent of its extended active duty goal.

The Air Force sent 32,068 new airmen to basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. The fiscal 1999 goal was 33,800. Additionally, the Air Force achieved 100 percent or better in 11 out of 12 officer programs. The nurse program only recruited 70 percent of its goal of 285.

This is the first year since 1979 that AFRS did not meet or exceed the enlisted goal, and is only the ninth time in 44 years of record keeping the Air Force has not met goal. In terms of quality, 99.2 percent of those enlisting are high school graduates, and many have college credit.

"We're pleased our recruiters closed the gap as much as they did over the summer months," Col. Darrel Greer, AFRS vice commander, said. "We anticipate a more productive fiscal 2000 because of our expanded marketing program, to include paid advertising, the addition of several hundred recruiters, and the continuation of enlistment bonuses." (AFPN)

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working together, totally integrated," said DiBattiste. "That is a very positive message coming out of Charleston."

The undersecretary was very impressed by the C-17 and its capabilities during a training mission to North Auxiliary Airfield.

"The C-17 is awesome," she said. "The ability that it has to land in such a short space, to turn and back up, is phenomenal. It did a fantastic job in Operation Allied Force and I think we should be very proud of the C-17."

The undersecretary pointed out what role the C-17 would play in the Expeditionary Aerospace Force that started Friday.

"The first two AEFs have assembled and deployed in part to Southwest Asia," DiBattiste said. "It is a great concept that will give our people predictability and stability. Making life better for everyone in the Air Force is our number one priority. Dedicated airlift will enable the AEFs to provide the right force at the right time, whether the mission is humanitarian relief or combat operations."

While the AEF is important, the undersecretary is focusing on recruiting, retention and benefits issues for the Air Force in the coming year.

"By March 2000, we will have 300 more recruiters on the job, for a total of 1209 nationwide," said DiBattiste. "We will plus—up another 300 by Sept. 2001, bringing the

total to 1509. That will be a key to help us with recruiting."

These recruiters will have many enlistment bonuses to try and bring the numbers back up from the shortfall the Air Force is currently experiencing.

"Many of our new members are taking advantage of the six-year enlistment bonuses," said DiBattiste. "These bonuses range from two to \$12,000, making it a good incentive to come in."

"We are also recruiting more prior service people within a year after they get out," DiBattiste continued. "This will help our retention problem because the people getting out are our skilled people."

Another way to get more people to sign up is through the use of those already in the Air Force.

"We need to try to get the senior leadership, that's senior NCOs and senior officers, out there doing more to help recruiting," said DiBattiste.

"More tours of the base, more reaching out to the community and more visibility in the community."

More visibility in the communities should help to advertise that the Air Force needs good people. An increase in the advertisement revenue should also bolster recruiting.

"We have increased the advertisement dollars to \$78 million from \$54 million last fiscal year," said DiBattiste. "This should help bridge the

gap between the Air Force and the American people. This will let them know what we are about and what we have to offer in education and training."

The retention issue drives the recruiting issue and the undersecretary laid out the plan to improve retention in the Air Force.

"The biggest step in retention has already been accomplished by the starting of the AEF," DiBattiste said.

"This will lower the OPSTEMPO, which is the number one item our people are saying on their exit surveys as to why they are getting out. We are doing some quality of life enhancements that should also help retention; the 4.8 percent pay raise that goes into effect Jan. 1, retention bonuses, aircrew incentive pay, pay table reform and a better retirement."

The undersecretary spent 20 years in the Air Force and retired in 1991. Since returning to the Air Force she has been impressed with what she has seen.

"The one thing that has not changed is the quality of the people," said DiBattiste. "We are not the great Air Force we are without the people. The people are number one, top of the line."

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-- Carol A. DiBattiste
Undersecretary of the Air Force